

Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC)

Basic Instrument

Article VI-1 of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Constitution. Resolution 4/61 of the FAO Council at its Sixty-first Session in November 1973. Statutes amended by FAO Council in December 1978.

Implementing Legislation

None

Member Nations

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, France, European Community, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

Commission Headquarters

FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean
6th Floor, Tom Adams Financial Centre
P.O. Box 631C
Bridgetown, Barbados

Secretary: Raymon van Anrooy
Telephone: 246 426 7110
Fax: 246 426 7111

Web address: http://www.fao.org/fi/body/rfb/WECAFC/wecafc_home.htm

U.S. Representation

NOAA Fisheries Service leads delegations to WECAFC. The delegation usually consists of representatives of the office of the Office of International Affairs, Southeast Region, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the Department of State.

Description

A. Mission/Purpose:

WECAF's purpose is to facilitate the coordination of research; to encourage education and training; to assist Member Governments in establishing rational policies; and to promote the rational management of resources of interest to two or more countries. The Commission has an advisory management function but no regulatory powers.

B. Organizational Structure:

The Commission, composed of all Members, is the central policy forum. The Commission has four Subsidiary Committees: (1) Working Party on Assessment of Marine Fishery Resources; (2) Working Party on Fishery Economics and Planning; (3) Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles; and (4) the Ad hoc working groups.

Recent Developments

The thirteenth session of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) and the ninth session of the Committee for the Development and Management of Fisheries in the Lesser Antilles were convened in Cartagena, Colombia, 21 to 24 October 2008. The meeting was preceded by a one and a half day regional workshop on the Nassau grouper conservation and management. An effort by the United States during 2004-2006 to strengthen

WECAFC as a regional fishery management organization in accordance with FAO Charter guidelines resulted in the retention of the status of the organization's advisory status. However, the effort did produce more clear rules of procedure which were adopted at the 13th meeting.

The 15th biennial meeting of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) was convened in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 26-28 March 2014. Although the status of many fisheries in the region warrants concern, there is clearly reason for optimism as evidenced by increased national and regional efforts for the management and conservation of some species, many coordinated by WECAFC. The meeting made significant progress in adopting recommendations for countries to adopt seasonal closures for fishing for Nassau grouper, a species that is in serious decline. The group also recommended specific management measures for queen conch, a species whose international trade is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The two organizations collaborate on management of this species, one of the few instances in which environment and fisheries authorities have such cooperation. The recommendation will be forwarded to the CITES Secretariat for consideration. The meeting also adopted other proposals calling for member countries to collaborate to strengthen fisheries management in the region.

A workshop on implementing the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing was convened concurrent with the WECAFC meeting. The Agreement allows party States refuse port entry or access to port services, including landing and transshipment of fish, to foreign-flagged vessels known to have engaged in IUU fishing. The WECAFC meeting adopted a resolution calling on member countries to become party to the FAO Agreement to collaborate in its implementation.

A resolution on transformation of WECAFC into a binding regional fisheries management organization was not adopted, with a number of countries indicating that the decision was premature. The European Union called for an independent cost/benefit assessment of the issue and will explore whether support of this initiative could be made available as well as for

In the midst of these accomplishments ran a deep undercurrent of unease and even anger about illegal, unregulated unreported fishing in the Wider Caribbean. In answer to these concerns, WECAFC created a new working group to consider the problem.

Staff Contacts

NOAA Fisheries:

Nancy K. Daves
National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of International Affairs
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Telephone: (301) 427-8360
Email: nancy.daves@noaa.gov

WECAFC Contact:

Raymon VonAnrooy
FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean
P.O. Box 631C
Barbados
Telephone: +246 426 7110
Fax: +246 426 7111